

WASHITA

Battlefield National Historic Site General Management Plan

October 1999 Newsletter #2

Dear Friends:

We are pleased to share this second *General Management Plan* newsletter with you and ask for your continued help in planning the future of Washita Battlefield National Historic Site. As a reminder, general management plans provide the guidance for overall management of all national park system areas. This process requires that we develop a range of possible alternative future conditions and management strategies for the site. The final plan will consider the purpose and significance of the park in determining resource preservation, visitor uses, development needs, and information/education issues for the next 15 to 20 years.

This newsletter is the first opportunity for you to respond to different preliminary alternatives. Your comments and suggestions will help in the selection of a preferred alternative, which will be published in a *Draft General Management Plan* and made available for review next year.

To facilitate this we are scheduling public open houses. These will be held during the last week of October. Information on places and times will be listed in local papers; or you may contact the park for more details. Maps, narrative descriptions, and members of our staff and planning team will be available to clarify the alternatives, answer questions that you may have and listen to your comments.

Your participation is important to us and we urge your continued involvement in this planning effort.

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How Alternatives Were Developed

Recently the planning team met to develop preliminary alternatives for management. Your comments from the public scoping meetings held this last May and from Newsletter #1, along with those of park staff and management, were all considered in the development of the alternatives.

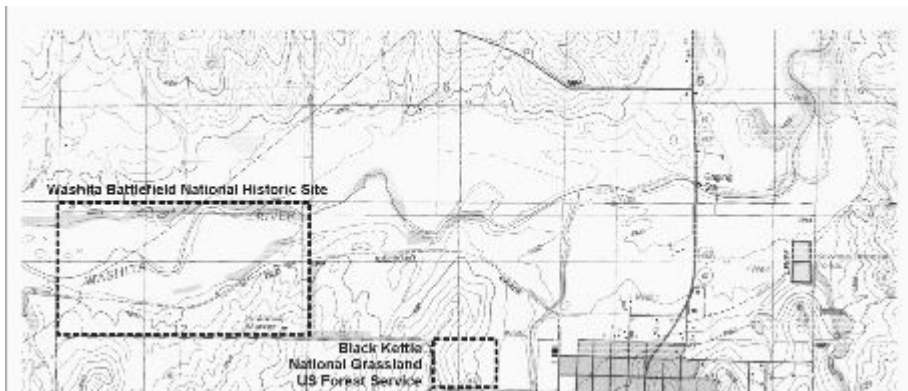
Some of the public comments received have reached beyond the scope of the General Management Plan to suggest specific solutions to problems. These are valuable ideas and we will refer to them again when we reach the future planning stages. Funding and staffing issues, for example, will be addressed by the parks' *Strategic Plan*, and specific interpretive needs by the *Comprehensive Interpretive Plan*.

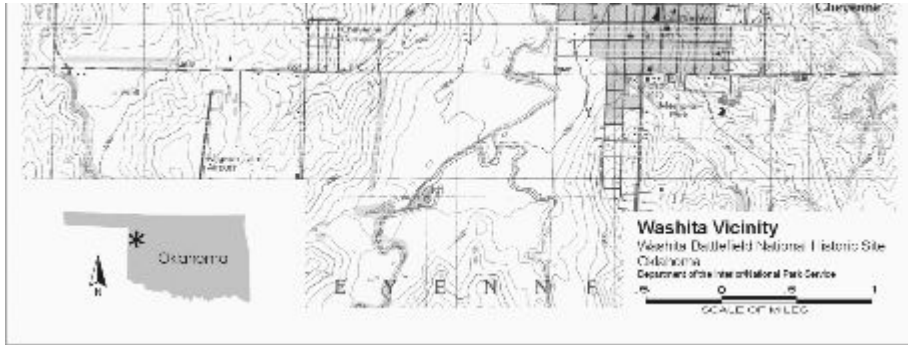
Other comments revolve around things that we must do regardless of planning initiatives.

Since much of basic park management is specified in laws, policy, and mandates, issues that fall into this category will not be addressed through alternatives. For example, the

legislation which created the National Historic Site (Public Law – 104-333, November 12, 1996) stipulated that the visual scene is to be protected and preserved "as closely as possible as it was at the time of the battle." Similar issues include a lack of basic resource data, handicapped accessibility, tribal and public involvement in decisions, protection and preservation of indigenous species and natural processes, and provisions for affiliated tribal members to carry out traditional activities. We strive to meet these mandates, regardless of the alternatives that are developed for other issues.

The remaining comments were related primarily to visitor use, interpretation, and education. Taken together, the comments and issues have been organized into two major decisions that the General Management Plan needs to make, while remaining consistent with park purpose and significance.





(click image for larger graphic)

How to Evaluate the Alternatives

Four draft alternatives follow. Existing conditions and three action alternatives that provide for change at the site are described so you can compare the effects of implementing the action alternatives to the existing conditions.

Each alternative is built upon a different underlying concept that is reflected in the alternative title. Concepts were developed from a desire to provide for a variety of visitor experiences and levels of resource protection. Each concept is translated into specific actions in management zones (e.g., Contemplative, Extended Learning, etc.) and are presented in table 1.

Management zoning describes how different areas of a park would be managed to achieve a variety of resource conditions and visitor experiences. To fully understand what each alternative's park experience would be like, you will probably want to refer to the full zone descriptions which follow.

When drawing boundaries for management zones in the alternatives we consider known resource conditions. For example, we have done our best to avoid directing new uses into areas that contain traditional cultural properties (properties that are important in the history of a cultural group and are a part of that group's traditional beliefs and practices) or areas with sensitive natural resources such as the river corridor.

Implementation of any alternative depends on funding. A general management plan provides analysis and justification for future funding, but in no way guarantees that money will be forthcoming. The plan will establish a vision that will guide year-to-year management of the site. Full implementation of the plan could be many years in the future.

The accompanying maps illustrate each alternative with key actions and show in more detail how the site would be zoned.

You may like some but not all the elements of one alternative, or you may like a concept but disagree with the way we have translated that concept into actual visitor experiences or resource protection in the park. **We need to know the reasons for your likes and dislikes.** Maybe you have an entirely different vision that would solve major issues far better than any of these presented. This is the kind of feedback that will help us formulate the best possible future for this site.

Table 1. Management Zones and Descriptions

Management Zones	<i>Visitor Experience</i>	<i>Resource Conditions</i>	<i>Types of Facilities</i>
Restoration-Conservation	While visitors would be allowed into this zone access would not be encouraged. They would be discovering independently. Solitude, natural quiet and undirected discovery would be key to this experience. There would be a very low probability of encounters with other visitors or evidence of visitor impacts.	Resources would be restored and managed to 1868 appearances with the long-term goal of resource conservation.	No visitor facilities.
Contemplative	Visitor experience would be primarily one of solitude with opportunities for quiet and reflection. Selected area(s) would provide secluded experience for spiritual reflection. They may be close to development (parking) to provide easy access. There would be a relatively low probability of encounters with other visitors.	Resources would be restored and managed to 1868 appearances. There would be some vegetation management to provide for access and seclusion.	Development would be limited to primitive trails with benches and low-tech shade (existing trees, arbors). Limited development in selected area(s) for accessibility with some signage for informational purposes.
Extended Learning	The experience within this zone would focus visitors to an on-site-in-the-resource experience with a combination of self-guided and ranger led activities. There would be a moderate probability of encountering other visitors.	Predominately natural with restoration to the 1868 appearance but managed to provide for interpretation and visitor safety.	Trails, overlooks and wayside exhibits and other media would be appropriate in these areas.
Development	Highly social, focused on education, orientation and visitor comfort. This structured environment would be highly accessible, and contacts with park staff and other visitors would be common.	Resources would be modified for visitor and park operational needs. These areas would not be located on or near sensitive natural or cultural resources if such resources could not be adequately protected.	Maintenance facilities, administrative facilities, visitor center, utilities, parking areas, demonstration areas (including gardens) and hardened circulation would be appropriate in these areas.

The Alternatives

Alternative A: Existing Conditions/No Action

This alternative is presented mostly for comparison with the action alternatives. The emphasis of this alternative would be to continue with the current management direction. Under this alternative, there would be no significant change in interpretation and the way the park is being managed.

Coordination would continue with agencies and other groups. However, there would be very little change on the site, or improvement of visitor facilities.

Alternative B: Window into The Past

Provide Visitors with Off-Site Learning Opportunities, While Preserving the Reflective Mood at the Site.

Extensive exhibits and programs available at a new off-site visitor center would provide an understanding of the events that occurred in November 1868. The visitor center would be at the current location of the U.S. Forest Service's Black Kettle National Grassland facility, approximately one mile east of the Washita Site. At the visitor center, cultural demonstrations, cooperative programs with the U.S. Forest Service, and possibly a Native American demonstration garden would educate visitors about the resources of the area.

Landscaping and shade would be provided at the redesigned overlook. Here the expansive prairie and riverine landscape spread out below would evoke a strong sense of the 1868 scene and enhance and continue the solemn and respectful mood established by interpretive media at the visitor center.

The historic scene at the overlook and surrounding contemplative area would provide a visual window into the past and opportunities to reflect on the nature of this encounter.



This alternative emphasizes the deep sense of respect and caring Native Americans have for the area. From the immediate vicinity of the overlook, visitors would be able to view the area along the river and the hills that hid the soldiers' advance. The restoration of the prairie ecosystem to the period of Black Kettle's camp would help visitors visualize the events that occurred here. The railroad grade would be removed in selected areas, and disturbed areas formerly occupied by homesites would be revegetated with native species. Most of the site would be preserved as untrailed expanses and unfragmented natural systems. Visitation would be managed with the goal of providing a

quality, but limited, learning experience at and near the overlook, while maintaining a sense of dignity and respect for those who died here.

Waysides located at the overlook would help tell the story. The natural quiet and solemn setting would be enhanced by having most facilities off-site in a relatively less sensitive area nearer the town of Cheyenne.

Consistent with this concept, efforts would be made to provide a broad range of educational offerings at the visitor center. By having the visitor center off-site, demonstrations of Native American crafts and traditions and cooperative programs with the U.S. Forest Service could be accommodated without intrusion on the historic site. Relatively pristine resource conditions could be restored and maintained throughout much of the site.

Some effects of this alternative would be:

- *The off-site visitor center would provide extensive orientation and interpretation for visitors while reducing impacts to on-site natural and cultural resources.*
- *Visitors wanting to access the entire site might be disappointed by lack of trails or other on-site facilities.*
- *Cooperative programs with the U.S. Forest Service and cultural demonstrations could be held at the visitor center area without disturbing the sanctity of the site.*

Alternative C: Integrated Visitor Experience

Provide Visitors with On-Site Learning Opportunities Through Integration of Visitor Facilities with the Historic Scene.

The goal of this alternative is to provide a diverse but integrated range of on-site visitor experiences while respecting site resources.

Thoughtful, non-intrusive integration of facilities such as a visitor center, trails, and waysides into the historic scene would provide continuity in the visitor experience. Visitors could stop first at the overlook where the scenic view and interpretive waysides would introduce them to the site. The overlook would be redesigned to minimize its impact upon the historic scene. Visitors would then proceed to the visitor center, which would be located on a previously disturbed house site west of the overlook. Here they would receive an orientation to the events that led to the attack on the Cheyenne winter village on the Washita. Space would be provided inside the visitor center for cultural demonstrations.

From the visitor center, loop trails of varying length and difficulty would channel visitors to important topographic and historic places situated across the site. Trails and interpretive materials would provide opportunities for visitors to experience the site briefly or more in depth.

An accessible trail would lead down to the river, where the visitor could get a closer view of the river, the village site, and the hills that sheltered the soldiers. A more primitive/rustic loop trail, one and one half mile in length, would take the visitor across the Washita River to the high ground on the north where they could experience an entirely different perspective of the military approach to the Indian village. These trails would be sited to avoid sensitive resources and areas where people were killed or fled from their attackers. Shaded benches would provide a quiet place to reflect on the events and on the loss of life that occurred here. Much of the village site and center of the park would be zoned for contemplative use, providing visitors an opportunity to sit quietly, imagine and reflect on the events of 1868.

Restoration of the prairie and the river corridor would have a high priority. Restoration of the historic scene would help give visitors a sense of place, allowing them to feel they have traveled back in time to revisit and understand the past. The railroad grade would be removed except in selected areas where it would be used as part of the trail system.

Some effects of this alternative would be:

- *Integration of visitor facilities into the site would provide continuity in interpretation and visitor experience.*
- *Visitors would have more opportunities for ranger-guided walks and there would be more waysides for self-guided tours than in Alternative B.*
- *Major facilities would be built in previously disturbed areas, but some still would be an intrusion on the historic scene.*
- *Visitors would have the opportunity to view the village site from two very different vantage points, helping them to better understand the military approach to the location.*
- *There would be more potential for disturbance to significant cultural and natural resources than in alternative B.*
- *To protect resources and to respect the nature of the site, cultural demonstrations would need to be held inside the visitor center. This might limit the size and type of demonstration that could be offered.*
- *There would be less of an opportunity to share programs with the U.S. Forest Service than in alternative B.*

Alternative D: Dispersed Visitor Experience

Provide Visitors with a Comprehensive Learning Experience Both On and Off-Site, While Preserving A Reflective Mood at the Site.

This alternative is based on an off-site visitor center combined with learning "nodes" at the site itself. At each "node" the visitor's understanding of the event is incrementally enhanced, helping to build a strong sense of history, as well as empathy for those who died here as one moves across the site. As in alternative B, the visitor's journey would begin at a new off-site orientation and visitor center shared with the U.S. Forest Service at their current location nearer Cheyenne. Here visitors would learn about the historical chronology and background of the 1868 encounter. They could observe cultural demonstrations and gardens, and participate in cooperative programs presented by the National Park Service and the Forest Service. The initial stop at the visitor center would provide the background for the next stage of the journey as the visitor proceeds to the redesigned overlook.

At the overlook the expansive views of the river, the village site, and the prairie hills would gradually draw visitors into the drama that unfolded at Washita. Waysides would help them understand the significance of the various topographic features and the progression of events, and gradually they would begin to integrate the messages they saw and heard at the visitor center with the historic scene below them.



The next stop or learning "node" would be a trailhead and staging area at the former house site west of the overlook. Shade, parking, water fountains, waysides, and vault toilets would be provided at the staging area. From here, waysides along a loop trail would help to incrementally broaden the visitor's understanding of the site, and would provide different views of the river and the hills beyond. A spur off the loop trail would lead across the river to the high ground beyond where, as in alternative C, the visitor could experience the perspective of the military approach to the Indian village.

At points along the trail, visitors could enter contemplative zones, where they could have the opportunity to sit quietly and view the restored landscape, imagining the cold, snowy scene along the river and on the hills beyond. To preserve the sanctity of the site, development would be low-key. The loop trail would avoid sensitive areas along the river edge and would circle around the village site. Portions of the existing railroad grade would be used for part of the trail wherever feasible. Boardwalks would be used to help protect resources and direct visitor use. Other segments of the trail, such as the north side of the river, would have a hardened surface, and trail materials would be compatible in color and type with the surrounding landscape.

Some effects of this alternative would be:

- *Visitors would learn the entire story at the off-site visitor center, but would have the opportunity to visit different areas of the site to further enhance their learning experience.*
- *On-site facilities would be very low-key. By having the visitor center off-site, additional opportunities for cultural demonstrations and gardens and cooperative programs with the Forest Service could be offered to visitors without intruding on the sanctity of the site.*
- *Visitors would have the opportunity to view the village site from two very different vantage points, helping them to better understand the military approach to the location.*
- *There would be less potential for disturbance to significant cultural and natural resources than in alternative C.*

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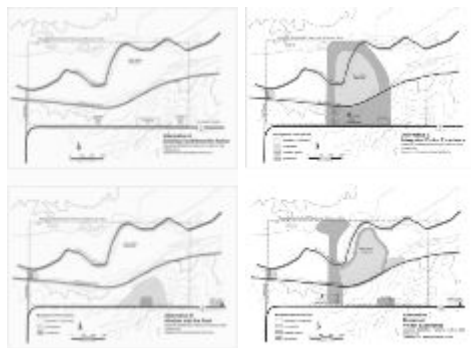


Table 2: Comparison of Alternatives

	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
	No Action			
Visitor Center/ Site Administration	<p>The National Park Service would not have a visitor center.</p> <p>Visitor contact would continue to be made at the administrative center in Cheyenne.</p> <p>Current location in Cheyenne would continue to serve for site administration.</p>	<p>An off-site visitor center would be combined with administrative offices and be a shared facility with the US Forest Service approximately a mile from the site, mid-way between the site and Cheyenne. This facility might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interpretive Exhibits ● Multi-use Auditorium ● Multi-media presentations ● NPS offices ● US Forest Service offices ● Office for Native American official ● Sales area for books and authentic Native American crafts ● Outdoor Native American demonstration area and garden ● Lobby ● Curatorial area with climate-control ● Library ● Research Area ● Break Room ● Bathrooms-Utilities ● Parking ● Picnic facilities 	<p>An on-site visitor center and administrative offices might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interpretive Exhibits ● Multi-use Auditorium ● Multi-media presentations ● NPS offices ● Office for Native American official ● Indoor Native American demonstration area ● Sales Area for books and authentic Native American crafts ● Lobby ● Curatorial area with climate-control ● Library ● Research Area ● Break Room ● Bathrooms-Utilities ● Parking <p>VC would be designed so further expansion would be feasible.</p>	<p>An off-site visitor center would be combined with administrative offices and be a shared facility with the US Forest Service approximately a mile from the site, mid-way between the site and Cheyenne. This facility might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interpretive Exhibits ● Multi-use Auditorium ● Multi-media presentations ● NPS offices ● US Forest Service offices ● Office for Native American official ● Sales Area for books and authentic Native American crafts ● Lobby ● Outdoor Native American demonstration area and garden ● Curatorial area with climate-control ● Library ● Research Area ● Break Room ● Bathrooms-Utilities ● Parking ● Picnic facilities

Overlook	<p>The current overlook would continue to serve as the primary interpretive area and visitor access area into the site.</p>	<p>The current overlook would be redesigned as the primary area of visitor use on-site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Redesign parking to include RV's and bus use ● Remove picnic tables and shade structure ● Provide new lower profile shade or trees and wind break structure with seating ● Landscaping ● Provide interpretive signing ● Provide low profile fencing such as split rail ● Provide a simple toilet facility such as a vault toilet. 	<p>The current overlook would be redesigned as a visual introduction to the park. It might be simpler and smaller than in alternative B.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited parking and one-way in and out access for oversize vehicles. ● Remove picnic tables and shade structure ● Provide new lower profile shade or trees and wind break structure with seating ● Provide interpretive signing ● Provide low profile fencing such as split rail 	<p>The current overlook would be redesigned as the first of several on-site learning "nodes."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Redesign parking to include RV's and bus use ● Remove picnic tables and shade structure ● Provide new lower profile shade or trees and wind break structure with seating ● Provide interpretive waysides. ● Provide low profile fencing such as split rail
Other Facilities	<p>Benches and shade adjacent to contemplative areas; interpretive signs along mowed trails.</p>	<p>Benches and shade adjacent to contemplative areas; few waysides along the trail.</p>	<p>Benches and shade would be placed adjacent to contemplative areas; waysides and interpretive signage would be along trails and in developed areas.</p>	<p>Staging area and trailhead at the former house site would provide shade, parking, water fountains, waysides and vault toilets. Benches and shade would be placed adjacent to contemplative areas; waysides and interpretive signage would be along trails and in developed areas.</p>
Trails	<p>Mowed trails would continue to provide visitor access into the site.</p>	<p>Mowed trails in the vicinity of the overlook would provide access down to the edge of the floodplain, overlooking the village site.</p>	<p>A loop trail would lead from the visitor center to the river, across the river to high ground on the north, back around the village area to the overlook, and back to the visitor center. The section of the trail from the visitor center to the river would be accessible.</p>	<p>A combination of boardwalks, hardened surface trails, and mowed trails would connect the trailhead to a loop trail around the village area (S. of the river); a spur trail would extend across the river to high ground on the north. The section of the trail from the visitor center to the river would be accessible.</p>
Restoration	<p>Continued restoration of prairie as funding permits.</p>	<p>Continued restoration of the prairie as in alternative A. Restoration of railroad grade within the immediate view of the overlook.</p>	<p>Continued restoration of the prairie as in alternative A. Restoration of entire railroad grade except where used for trail system.</p>	<p>Continued restoration of the prairie as in alternative A. The railroad grade would be restored where visible from visitor use areas; parts of the grade would be used for the trail system.</p>

What is Next

This next step is to get your comments on these preliminary alternatives. Public involvement will be a key to preparing a viable plan for the historic site. The plan needs to provide ways for the site to be a part of the community while protecting the site's resources. All ideas are encouraged. Please take time to fill out the enclosed comment form and return within 30 days.

Also, please be aware that due to public disclosure requirements, the National Park Service, if requested, is required to make the names and addresses of commenters public. However, individual respondents may request that this information not be released. The National Park Service will then determine whether the information can be withheld under the Freedom of Information Act, and we will honor your request to the extent allowed by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

Planning Tasks and Schedule		
	Step	Date
1	<i>Data Gathering and Analysis</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Seek out Native American and public views and concerns; and review and summarize public comments received● Compile and analyze new information	Spring/Summer 1999
2	<i>Alternatives Development</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Refine the purpose and significance statements, mission goals, and interpretive themes● Identify alternatives for resource preservation, interpretation, and visitor use; hold public meetings	Summer/Fall 1999
3	<i>Draft Plan and Environmental Impact Statement</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Prepare a draft plan and environmental impact statement● Provide a public review and comment period; hold public meetings	Throughout 2000
4	<i>Final Plan and Environmental Impact Statement</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Revise the draft plan based on public comment● Transmit final plan and environmental impact statement for approval	Winter/Spring 2001

National Park Service Planning Team Members and Participants

- Pam Benjamin, Vegetation Ecologist, National Park Service, Intermountain Support Office
- Joe BigMedicine, Cheyenne NAGPRA Representative, Concho, Oklahoma
- Steve Black, Historian & Chief of Interpretation, National Park Service, Washita Battlefield National Historic Site
- Sarah Craighead, Superintendent, National Park Service, Washita Battlefield National Historic Site
- Kate Hammond, Interpretive Planner, National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center, Denver Office
- Jeff Heywood, Job Captain & Landscape Architect, National Park Service, Denver Service Center
- Greg Jarvis, Natural Resource Planner & Compliance Specialist, National Park Service, Denver Service Center
- William Pedro, Arapaho NAGPRA Representative, Concho, Oklahoma
- Diane Rhodes, Archeologist & Cultural Resource Planner & Compliance Specialist, National Park Service, Denver Service Center
- Ron Shields, Project Manager, National Park Service, Denver Service Center
- Gordon Yellowman, Cheyenne NAGPRA and National Historic Preservation Act Representative, Concho, Oklahoma

Public involvement will be a key to preparing a viable plan for the historic site. The plan needs to provide ways for the site to be a part of the community while protecting the site 's resources. Your input will help direct study efforts to areas that are most important to you.

All ideas are encouraged. Please feel free to email the [Superintendent](#) (just click) or mail any comments to:

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